

**What is claimed is:**

1. A method for controlling an illumination of a display screen in portable wireless communication device comprising:

illuminating a display screen;

5 determining at least one illumination time parameter corresponding to the information to be displayed on the display screen; and

maintaining the illumination of the display screen for a period of time that is based on the at least one illumination time parameter.

10 2. The method of claim 1, wherein maintaining the illumination of the display screen for a period of time comprises:

determining a time value based on the at least one illumination time parameter;

decrementing the time value to produce a remaining time value; and

terminating the illumination of the display screen when the remaining time value

15 no longer exceeds zero.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein determining at least one illumination time parameter comprises determining a plurality of illumination time parameters and wherein an illumination time parameter of the plurality of illumination time parameters comprises

20 a time constant.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the illumination time parameter comprises at least one of a length of a message, a number of lines of the display screen required to display a message, and a type of message to be displayed.

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5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

when the display screen is illuminated, receiving an instruction to terminate the illumination of the display screen; and

30 in response to receiving the instruction, terminating the illumination of the display screen prior to the expiration of the period of time.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein illuminating a display screen comprises:  
sensing a level of ambient light;  
comparing the level of ambient light to an ambient light threshold;  
when the level of ambient light is greater than the ambient light threshold,  
5 determining to not illuminate the display screen; and  
wherein illuminating a display screen comprises illuminating a display screen  
when the level of ambient light is less than the ambient light threshold,

7. The method of claim 1, wherein maintaining the illumination of the display screen  
10 comprises:  
sensing a level of ambient light;  
comparing the level of ambient light to an ambient light threshold; and  
when the level of ambient light is greater than the ambient light threshold,  
terminating the illumination of the display screen prior to the expiration of the period of  
15 time.

8. An apparatus for controlling illumination of a display screen in portable wireless communication device comprising:

a light source that is capable of illuminating the display screen; and

5 a processor coupled to the light source that couples power to the light source to illuminate the a display screen, determines at least one illumination time parameter corresponding to the message to be displayed on the display screen, and maintains a coupling of power to the light source for a period of time that is based on the at least one illumination time parameter.

10 9. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the apparatus further comprises a timer coupled to the processor and wherein the processor maintains the illumination of the display screen for a period of time by determining a time value based on the at least one illumination time parameter, wherein the time value corresponds to the period of time, setting the timer based on the time value, decrementing the timer to produce a remaining 15 time value, and terminating the illumination of the display screen when the remaining time value no longer exceeds zero.

10. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the at least one illumination time parameter comprises a plurality of illumination time parameters, wherein an illumination time 20 parameter of the plurality of illumination time parameters comprises a time constant, and wherein the apparatus further comprises a memory device coupled to the processor that maintains the time constant.

11. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the illumination time parameter comprises at 25 least one of a length of a message, a number of lines of the display screen required to display the message, and a type of message to be displayed.

12. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the processor, when the display screen is illuminated, further receives an instruction to terminate the illumination of the display 30 screen and, in response to receiving the instruction, decouples power from the light source prior to the expiration of the period of time.

13. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the apparatus further comprises a light sensor coupled to the processor that senses a level of ambient light and conveys a signal corresponding to the sensed level of ambient light to the processor and wherein the processor further compares the level of ambient light to an ambient light threshold that is maintained in a memory device coupled to the processor, couples power to the light source to illuminate the a display screen when the level of ambient light is less than the ambient light threshold, and determines to not illuminate the display screen when the level of ambient light is greater than the ambient light threshold.

10 14. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the apparatus further comprises a light sensor coupled to the processor that senses a level of ambient light and conveys a signal corresponding to the sensed level of ambient light to the processor and wherein the processor further compares the level of ambient light to an ambient light threshold that is maintained in a memory device coupled to the processor and, when the level of ambient 15 light is greater than the ambient light threshold, terminates illumination of the display screen prior to the expiration of the period of time.

15. A portable wireless communication device comprising:  
a display screen;  
a light source that is capable of illuminating the display screen; and  
a processor coupled to the light source that couples power to the light source to  
5 illuminate the a display screen, determines at least one illumination time parameter  
corresponding to the message to be displayed on the display screen, and maintains a  
coupling of power to the light source for a period of time that is based on the at least one  
illumination time parameter, wherein the coupling of power to the light source causes the  
light source to illuminate the display screen.

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16. The portable wireless communication device of claim 15, wherein the portable  
wireless communication device further comprises a timer coupled to the processor and  
wherein the processor maintains the illumination of the display screen for a period of time  
by determining a time value based on the at least one illumination time parameter, setting  
15 the timer based on the time value, wherein the time value corresponds to the period of  
time, decrementing the timer to produce a remaining time value, and terminating the  
illumination of the display screen when the remaining time value no longer exceeds zero.

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17. The portable wireless communication device of claim 15, wherein the at least one  
illumination time parameter comprises a plurality of illumination time parameters,  
20 wherein an illumination time parameter of the plurality of illumination time parameters  
comprises a time constant, and wherein the portable wireless communication device  
further comprises a memory device coupled to the processor that maintains the time  
constant.

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18. The portable wireless communication device of claim 15, wherein the processor,  
when the display screen is illuminated, further receives an instruction to terminate the  
illumination of the display screen and, in response to receiving the instruction, decouples  
power from the light source prior to the expiration of the period of time.

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19. The portable wireless communication device of claim 15, further comprising a  
light sensor coupled to the processor that senses a level of ambient light and conveys a

signal corresponding to the sensed level of ambient light to the processor, and wherein the processor further compares the level of ambient light to an ambient light threshold that is maintained in a memory device coupled to the processor, couples power to the light source to illuminate the a display screen when the level of ambient light is less than the 5 ambient light threshold, and determines to not illuminate the display screen when the level of ambient light is greater than the ambient light threshold.

20. The portable wireless communication device of claim 15, further comprising a light sensor coupled to the processor that senses a level of ambient light and conveys a 10 signal corresponding to the sensed level of ambient light to the processor, and wherein the processor further compares the level of ambient light to an ambient light threshold that is maintained in a memory device coupled to the processor and, when the level of ambient light is greater than the ambient light threshold, terminates illumination of the display screen prior to the expiration of the period of time.